



# Michigan State Historic Preservation Office Style Guide

*Updated April 16, 2019*

National Register nominations, survey reports, and other documents should adhere to *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMOS) rules, except as noted below. Some of the most common problem areas are listed below. This is not comprehensive so please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style* 17th Edition for anything that is not covered. Revisions to the style sheet will be made as needed. Note that chapter and section numbers listed refer to the CMOS 17th edition.

The problem areas listed here provide guidance for writing the narrative portions of the nomination.

**NOTE:** Authors of archaeological nominations and reports may refer to the *American Antiquity* Style Guide.

## **ABBREVIATIONS (Chapter 8: Names, Terms, and Titles of Works, and Chapter 10: Abbreviations)**

Do not abbreviate unless instructed otherwise by CMOS or the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In particular do not abbreviate state names or street types. (8.56)

Spell out proper nouns that include “saint” and “mount,” even when such nouns are commonly abbreviated. For example: “Mount Pleasant” or “Sault Sainte Marie.” (10.20)

Do not shorten architectural style names. Use “Art Deco” not “Deco.”

## **ACRONYMS AND INITIALISMS (10.9)**

An **acronym** is read as a single word, e.g. NASA, MSHDA, SHPO. Since acronyms are read aloud as words, they are rarely preceded by an “a,” an “an,” or a “the.”

*SHPO appreciates the hard work of consultants.*

An exception is when they are used adjectivally, such as *a SHPO initiative*.

An **initialism** is read aloud as individual initials, e.g. NBA, HMO, DNR, so they are usually preceded by a definite article.

*Hunting season is regulated by the DNR.*

## **BRACKETS VS. PARENTHESES**

See CMOS for a variety of discussions about the differences between brackets and parentheses, in particular: 6.99–6.101, 13.59–13.61, and 6.95–6.98.

## **CAPITALIZATION (Chapter 8)**

### **Academic subjects and academic degrees (8.85)**

Academic subjects are not capitalized unless they are proper nouns such as English or French, or unless they form a department name or the title of a course.

*During winter term the MSU Department of Urban Planning offered the course the History of Historic Preservation.*

Academic degrees are lower case in prose. (8.29)

*A master of arts in American studies can lead to a fulfilling, but perhaps not financially lucrative, life.*

### **Architectural style names**

Architectural style names are capitalized. (NOTE: This is an exception to CMOS 17.)

Lower case “school” in Chicago school.

Lower case “style” in International style.

### **Governmental units (8.52)**

Capitalize city and state when referring to an official governmental unit, otherwise lowercase them.

*The City of Menominee is one of Michigan’s Certified Local Governments.*

[This sentence refers to the governmental unit of the City of Menominee.]

*The capitol Christmas tree in the city of Lansing, may be the state of Michigan’s tallest.*

[This sentence refers to the geographical area that is the city of Lansing. Also note that “state” is lowercased.]

Capitalize “County” when using it as part of the name, even when you are referring to more than one in a sentence.

*The people in Ontonagon and Keweenaw Counties are among the hardest of all Michiganders.*

### **Institutions and companies (8.68)**

The names of organizations are capitalized when used in full. They are not capitalized when used in part.

*The Michigan Historic Preservation Network tells decision makers everything they need to know about historic preservation but were afraid to ask.*

*The network hosts a fabulous conference each spring. You should go!*

Note: SHPO makes a self-serving exception for National Register as a partial name for the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Lakes, rivers, etc. (8.53)**

Names of lakes, rivers, islands, etc. are capitalized. The generic terms are also capitalized when they are part of the names, even when you are referring to more than one in a sentence.

*The AuSable and Muskegon Rivers attract fisherman who like to wade in cold water.*

### **Professional Titles (8.19)**

Professional titles are only capitalized when they precede a person's name. They are not capitalized when they follow the name.

*State Historic Preservation Officer Brian Conway is a cool guy.*

*Dean Anderson, the state archaeologist, has a "PhD in digging."*

Note that when a title is used in apposition before a person's name, meaning when it is part of a descriptive phrase, it is lowercased. In the example below the word "former" makes the title descriptive. (8.21)

*When asked about a historic building, former national register coordinator Robert Christensen often questioned, "That old thing?"*

### **COLONS (6.61-6.67) AND SEMICOLONS (6.56-6.60)**

See CMOS 17 for details about the various uses of colons and semicolons. The most common and basic uses are described below.

**Colons** introduce elements that illustrate or emphasize the information that preceded the colon.

*Local building materials add texture to Michigan's landscape: Portage Entry sandstone, Veneklassen brick, and locally gathered fieldstone.*

Sometimes colons join two independent clauses, but they should only be used to signal that the second clause illustrates or amplifies the first.

*Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits spur economic development: \$371,787,171 was invested in rehabilitating historic properties in 2017.*

**Semicolons** join two independent clauses. While the clauses could stand alone as sentences, the semicolon indicates a closer connection than periods would. At the same time, however, the semicolon should not be used if the second clause amplifies the first. In that case, a colon should be used.

*Michigan's State Parks contain archaeological sites investigated by state archaeologists; Fayette, Hartwick Pines and Copper Harbor are among the parks.*

Semicolons also separate series elements with internal punctuation.

*In 2017 a Governor's Award for Historic Preservation was given to LC Consultants LLC; Concept Design Studio, Inc.; Rockford Construction, Inc.; Nehil-Sivak Structural Engineers; and Past Perfect Inc. for the rehabilitation of the Century Furniture Co. and Central Furniture Co./H. E. Shaw Furniture Buildings in Grand Rapids.*

## **COMMAS (6.16-6.55)**

Some basic comma rules include:

Use a serial comma (also known as the Oxford comma) in sentences with a series of three or more items before the conjunction. Although many people omit the serial comma, CMOS—and the SHPO—use it to prevent misunderstanding. (6.19)

Note the disastrous consequences of an omitted comma in these amusing examples:

Without comma:

*"Top stories: World leaders at Mandela tribute, Obama-Castro handshake and same-sex marriage date set."*

With comma:

*"Top stories: World leaders at Mandela tribute, Obama-Castro handshake, and same-sex marriage date set."*

Without comma:

*I'd like to thank my parents, the pope and Mother Theresa.*

With comma:

*I'd like to thank my parents, the pope, and Mother Theresa.*

### **Commas in Pairs (6.17)**

In prose a comma should be placed before and after a state name in a **city and state** reference.

*If you live in Kalamazoo, Michigan, you probably hear "I've Gotta Gal" more than you would like.*

In prose a comma should be placed before and after the year in a **full date**.

*The National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law on October 15, 1966, and all seemed right with the world.*

### **Commas with relative clauses – "that" vs. "which" (6.27)**

"That" and "which" are often misused. Please refer to CMOS 6.27 for a detailed explanation of usage.

In short, restrictive relative clauses are usually introduced with *that*; nonrestrictive clauses (or parenthetical clauses) are introduced with *which*. Restrictive means the clauses are essential to understanding the meaning. Nonrestrictive means the clause can be omitted without causing confusion.

*The National Register nomination that Todd Walsh authored about his boyhood home was approved by the keeper.*

*Grand Marais's Pickle Barrel, which is listed in the National Register, is a house rather than an enormous vessel for food storage.* (Also see 7.18 regarding possessives of words and names ending in an unpronounced "s.")

### **Family relationships and other appositives**

An appositive provides an explanation for a noun. If it can be omitted without leading to confusion, it is nonrestrictive and you should use commas. If it can be omitted because it provides vital information, then it is restrictive and you should not use commas.

Use parenthetical commas around the name of family members when there can be only one such relative: father, mother, husband, and wife. The parenthetical commas indicate that the name can be omitted without losing the meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, commas should be omitted when referring to daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.

*Charles Eames's wife, Ray, is often believed to have been his brother when people hear them referred to as "Charles and Ray Eames."* (Also see 7.19 regarding possessives of names like "Euripides.")

*Albert Kahn's brother Julius patented the Kahn system of reinforced concrete construction.*

See CMOS 6.29 regarding commas with restrictive and nonrestrictive descriptive phrases.

### **Junior and Senior**

You need not use a comma between a name and the words Junior or Senior. Note: this is a change from earlier versions of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. (6.43)

*Berry Gordy Jr. founded the Motown record label.*

### **Short introductory adverbial phrases**

Do not use a comma after short adverbial phrases unless misreading is likely.

*In 2010 the State Historic Preservation Office became part of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.*

But

*Before eating, SHPO staff sang "Happy Birthday."*

### **EM DASHES VS. EN DASHES (CMOS 6.78–6.92)**

**Em dashes** set off copy for emphasis or explanation. They are the length of a character space (an em) and should not be flanked by spaces.

*The building was not completed until June 1895—nearly seven years after it was started—due to a strange variety of impediments, including a "brick famine" in Bay City that lasted for many months.*

**En dashes** are used in place of the word "to" in date ranges, times, page numbers, etc. They should not be used with the word "from."

*The State Historic Preservation Office is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.*

*Join us at the State Historic Preservation Review Board meeting, January 12, 2018, 10:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.*

### **HYPHENATION AND COMPOUNDS**

Hyphenation should be kept to a minimum. Use hyphens when they are necessary to prevent misreading.

Check the dictionary to learn whether to hyphenate particular words. (Note: Do not hyphenate *nonprofit*.)

In addition there is a hyphenation guide in the CMOS; please refer to 7.89.

The improper hyphenation of **adverbs ending in “ly”** seems to be a chronic problem. Do not insert a hyphen following an adverb ending in “ly.” There is no chance for misreading. (7.86)

*The National Register of Historic Places is a federally funded program.*

## NUMBERS

See CMOS 17, chapter 9, for an in-depth discussion of how to treat numbers. Here are some basics.

Spell numbers one through one hundred and any of those numbers followed by hundred, thousand, hundred thousand, or million unless you are writing for a scientific publication or you are referring to monetary amounts. (9.2)

*Brian Grennell cheerfully ushers through the review of roughly five thousand federally funded, permitted, or licensed projects per year.*

*SHPO staff reviewed 1,302 housing rehabilitations in 2017.*

Monetary amounts less than one hundred dollars are generally spelled out. Amounts of more than one hundred dollars are a combination of numerals and spelled-out numbers.

Do not use superscript with numbers. Ordinal numbers should appear as 17th, 2nd, and 33rd, not as 17<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 33<sup>rd</sup>. (9.6)

## Centuries

Spell centuries: *nineteenth century, twenty-first century*. (9.32)

Use a hyphen when it is an adjectival noun: *twentieth-century development*. (7.89 section 3)

## Numbered Street Names

Numbered street names of less than one hundred should be spelled in prose. On the other hand, highway numbers should be presented with numerals. (9.50-9.51)

*Miracles occurred on Thirty-Fourth Street when Kris was found to be sane and Doris believed he was Santa Claus.*

*SHPO staff members like to get their kicks on Route 66.*

For street names with numbers greater than one hundred, use the numeral, but do not use superscript.

*Katie Kolokithas cringed when the realtor described a terrific bungalow on 122nd Street as Victorian.*

Not

*Martha MacFarlane-Faes informed the property owner that building a McMansion on 101<sup>st</sup> Street would be inappropriate in a historic district.*

Note that street, avenue, and the like should also be spelled out in prose.

### **Percentages and Currency**

Do not use percent or dollar signs. For percentages, use the numeral followed by percent, (9.18). For currency figures, spell “dollars.”

*Former SHPO staff member Laura Ashlee was ninety-nine percent sure she frustrated her colleagues by reminding them to only put one space after a period at the end of a sentence.*

*The building was constructed at a cost of 325,019 dollars.*

### **QUOTATION MARKS**

See CMOS 17, 6.9 for guidance on the use of quotation marks and other punctuation marks.

Also

Do not use opening and closing quotation marks with block quotations, which are indented right and left. NOTE: If you quote material within the block, then double marks should be used. (CMOS 13.30 and 13.36)

### **PLURALS AND POSSESSIVES**

See CMOS 7.5–7.29 regarding plurals and possessives,

### **THE WORD “STYLE”**

Avoid using the word “style” unless it is needed for clarity, e.g.: a Greek Revival house, a Prairie-style church. (The absence of “style” in the latter could indicate a church located on a prairie, or, perhaps, a heretofore undiscovered denomination.)

### **PROBLEMATIC WORDS**

Entire books are written about words that are frequently confused, misused, and abused, but here are some that commonly occur in National Register nominations.



### **Comprise vs. compose**

To quote the American Heritage College Dictionary, “The whole comprises its parts.”

*The United States of America comprises fifty states.*

*Eighty-three counties compose the state of Michigan.*

*The SHPO staff comprises archaeologists and historians, as well as architects like Debra Ball Johnson, historic architects like Robbert McKay, and preservation planners like Amy Arnold.*

### **Farther vs. Further**

Farther relates to physical distance.

*Stacy Tchorzynski’s drive with Jessica Yann to Copper Harbor Lighthouse was farther than Bryan Lijewski’s drive to a lighthouse conference in Des Moines, Iowa.*

Further relates to depth or abstract distance.

*When a contract proposal estimated \$100,000 for travel, Joelle Letts pledged to investigate further.*

### **Fewer vs. Less**

“Less” has somehow been incorrectly replaced by “fewer.” Someone might say “There were less people at MHPN’s conference last year than this year,” when in fact they mean fewer. You won’t ever hear “A liter of milk has fewer than a gallon”!

Fewer denotes individual items that can be counted.

*Diane Tuinstra hopes (and prays) that fewer errors occur with SHPO’s new database than the old one.*

Less denotes quantity.

*Historic properties are granted less respect in some communities than in others.*

### **Which vs. That**

See discussion above under “Commas with relative clauses.”

### **SPACING**

Use one space after periods at the end of sentences.

## CITATIONS, FOOTNOTES, AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC ENTRIES

The National Park Service requires that National Register nominations be “adequately documented,” and that a bibliography of “major sources” be included in each nomination. Please note that the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office requires that all cited sources be noted using footnotes. End notes and in-text citations are not permitted

Footnote and bibliographical entries should conform to the format specified for the particular source, as noted in the *Chicago Manual of Style*. However, where as CMOS suggests a short form entry for subsequent, in-text citations, the SHPO requires full citations unless the subsequent citation falls on the same page as the preceding citation, in which case “ibid” should be used. (14.19) In both cases this is a departure from CMOS, which now prefers short form citations and discourages the use of “ibid.” (14.34) SHPO requires full citations due to the nature of the preparing and reviewing National Register nominations. Full citations and ibids facilitate more efficient reviews by SHPO staff.

## GENERAL COMMENTS

Use the active voice rather than the passive voice whenever possible. If you minimize use of the words “is” and “was” your language will be more active, and you will use fewer words.

Avoid the use of the archaic auxiliary “did” (and other forms of “do”) with the root form of a verb, unless the emphasis of the action is necessary to confirm a previous statement, when the action is unexpected, or when the previous statement needs correction. For example, when write a declarative sentence, write:

*Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids.*

Not

*Frank Lloyd Wright did design the Meyer May House in Grand Rapids.*

In oral communication, the use of “did” to respond to a question about the house may be appropriate, however, the use of “did” and a verb is generally unnecessary in written communication.

## QUESTIONS

If you have questions about a particular topic, please contact the State Historic Preservation Office.